



## **Obesity Intervention for Postpartum Women, Infants, and Toddlers**

### **Objective**

To reduce the percentage of overweight and obese women and children in Louisiana

### **Performance Indicators**

- % of children aged 2-5 receiving WIC services with a BMI  $\geq$  85th
- % of pregnant women with a pre-pregnancy BMI  $\geq$  30
- # of pregnant and postpartum women counseled by a Registered Dietitian
- Number of child care centers receiving consultation from Registered Dietitian

### **Narrative**

The obesity epidemic has spared no age group & studies have shown that efforts to prevent obesity must start at the earliest stages of development, even before birth. It has been shown that a proportion of children as young as two years old are already overweight. This indicates that obesity prevention programs that commence as early as possible & are family-focused are needed. The Louisiana Obesity Council recommended a home-based intervention that links with Louisiana's successful Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) Program & Child Care Quality Rating System. This program will designate Registered Dietitians with special training in obesity intervention to provide family intervention, obesity prevention & weight management to overweight & obese clients & nutrition consultation to child care centers across the state. Over the 2.5 years of participation in the NFP program, many families are able to change unhealthy behaviors as evidenced in outcome data. This program will add an obesity prevention component for children & a weight management component for pregnant and postpartum women that currently is not available in the NFP model. Early identification and referral to services of pregnant women identified to have the greatest rates of overweight & obesity will occur through NFP nurses. In addition to home-based nutrition counseling, participants will also receive physical activity guidance from an Exercise Physiologist. Nutritional counseling to overweight & obese pregnant & postpartum women will utilize the Institute of Medicine recommendations for weight gain in pregnancy & will target sustained breastfeeding, appropriate introduction of solids, avoidance of the use of less healthy foods & sweetened drinks, promotion of fresh fruits and vegetables & the encouragement of daily physical activity. The American Dietetic Association Adult Weight Management and Pediatric Weight

Management Evidence-Based Nutrition Practice Guidelines will be followed. There are approximately 2,000 licensed child care centers statewide. This initiative will focus on obesity prevention policies regarding nutrition & physical activity in the Louisiana Child Care Quality Rating System, licensing requirements, and the required training for licensed child care centers. Registered Dietitians will provide individual consultations, as well as trainings, to child care centers. Referral of obese or overweight children age 2-5 for obesity prevention services will also be included.

According to Louisiana's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System data, 23% of Louisiana's pregnant women are obese. Obesity prevalence among preschool-aged children has increased from 12.4 % in 1998 to 14.6 % in 2008. **The CDC has designated "reducing the proportion of children and adolescence who are overweight or obese to 5 %" as one of the objectives of Healthy People 2010.** Prevention of overweight in early childhood has more promise for good outcomes than tertiary treatment of an obese child. Evidence shows that sustained breastfeeding, the appropriate introduction of solids, the avoidance of the use of less healthy foods and sweetened drinks, the encouragement of physical activity can contribute to the prevention of overweight in early childhood. Moreover, treatment of overweight for the pregnant and postpartum woman offers the opportunity to build a foundation for the family to follow good nutrition practices and have a healthy family environment. The American Dietetic Association (ADA) is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. Registered Dietitians are trained & positioned to make vital contributions to the prevention and treatment of obesity. This program will contract with private Registered Dietitians in each region with a background in obesity prevention and management. This initiative will be advised by the Louisiana Obesity Council, Louisiana Quality Start-Childcare Quality Rating system, Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Louisiana Action for Healthy Kids, a national organization working in all to address the epidemic of overweight & sedentary youth, Department of Education Child & Adult Food Program, Department of Social Services-Child Care & their child care training/technical assistance Resource & Referral agencies. These entities will assist in implementation, evaluating the results of the intervention, and assist in leveraging additional funding for expansion.

## **Better Health**

Obesity has been persistently linked to increases in costly chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer & heart disease, which is the number one cause of death in the U.S. In 2000 the total annual cost of obesity in the U.S. was \$117 billion. There are at least 17 million Americans with diabetes & another 16 million have pre-diabetes. Each year diabetes costs the nation \$132 billion. Obesity is one of the leading preventable diseases. Analysis from the ADA evidence based library affirm that Medical Nutrition Therapy by a Registered Dietitian resulted in improved outcomes & reduced costs related to physician time, medication use & hospital admissions for people with obesity, diabetes & disorders of lipid metabolism. ADA states the following strategies for addressing the obesity epidemic: **"Create programs integrating both nutrition & physical activity & support the individual to be able to make wise lifestyle choices; support multidisciplinary health initiatives over a substantial period of time with registered**

**dietetic professionals placed to add their particular knowledge & skills; promote healthy weight for children; ensure continued monitoring & data collection of food intake, eating behavior & health status.” The ADA stated its position that** all child care programs should achieve recommended benchmarks for meeting children’s nutrition needs & that nutrition professionals work in partnership with child care providers & with families to ensure that meals & snacks meet children’s nutrition needs & provide them with models of healthy dietary patterns. This program will designate Registered Dietitians positioned to make vital contributions to the prevention & treatment of obesity to provide family intervention, obesity prevention & weight management to obese clients & nutrition consultation to child care centers across the state. In addition to the ADA Evidence-Based Nutrition Practice Guidelines, the ADA Benchmarks for Nutrition Programs in Child Care Settings will be followed.